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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [MOPS](#) [EAID](#) [PK](#)
SUBJECT: NWFP: LOCAL PERCEPTIONS OF THE SWAT DEAL

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REASON: 1.4 (d)

Summary

1. (C) According to Swat-based contacts, the ceasefire and the agreement to implement Shari'a law are welcomed by most residents but not expected to last. The army caused a great deal of damage, failed to take advantage of the intelligence provided by the local population who they did not trust and allowed the militants to go largely unpunished. Police are needed to maintain law and order. The militants are likely to use the ceasefire to rearm and regroup. Even with the expectation of an eventual breakdown in the ceasefire, Swat's level of violence had reached such a degree that respite even at the price of a tacit admission of government weakness appears to have been acceptable to the local population. End Summary.

Local Views on the Swat Deal

2. (C) Post spoke individually to a range of primarily Swat citizen contacts on February 18 and 19 for their views on the Swat ceasefire and plan to implement Shari'a law. The group included a doctor, a lawyer, several local NGO workers, a founder of a peace organization, two recently internally displaced persons (IDP), and an expatriate aid worker focused on Swat for the last 10 years.

Peace and Quick Justice At Any Price?

3. (C) All except one were happy that a ceasefire was in place. Several said that the fighting had been so destructive that peace regardless of the conditions under which it was agreed to, was preferable to the fighting. Several stated that the opening of the markets was a welcomed event due to the hardships that many were facing. All except one believed that Shari'a law would bring much needed quick justice although how that would occur was not generally known. The lawyer maintained that Shari'a law was already being practiced through out Swat.

What About The Army?

4. (C) According to the majority of those interviewed, the army caused a great deal of damage, failed to take advantage of the

intelligence provided by the local population, and allowed the militants to go largely unpunished. Large numbers of police, who would know the local population, were needed if law and order were to be restored. Two of those interviewed said prior to the latest fighting they had viewed government security check posts in full view of militant check posts operating simultaneously.

Skeptical Of The Ceasefire

15. (C) Some said that a few of the militants who committed the most gruesome of murders were now being hailed as heroes and that contributed to their skepticism of the ceasefire. Several contacts commented that since neither side was fully committed to a ceasefire and because the last agreement failed, the latest deal was not likely to last. Most expected the militants to use the ceasefire period to rearm and regroup either to renew violence in Swat or move to another agency. A number of those interviewed observed the public attitude was that the militants had won the day by forcing this agreement.

Comment

16. (C) The level of violence had reached such a degree in Swat that respite even at the price of a tacit admission of government weakness appears to have been acceptable to the local population. There is widespread sentiment beyond our Swat contacts, reflected in some conversations with government officials as well as local press editorials that the ceasefire is unlikely to hold long.

TRACY